Le Coquillage, Saint-Méloir-des-Ondes, France, Europe

A sea-farer's song of tide and terroir

A maritime mise en place: Surrounded by salt marshes, oyster beds and tidal flats, Saint-Méloir-des-Ondes is a picturesque Breton village overlooking the mercurial waters of Mont-Saint-Michel Bay. For more than a thousand years, this extraordinary stretch of coastline has supplied generations of fishermen, oyster farmers and chefs with some of France's finest fruits de mer – and today, it's home to Le Coquillage, one of the world's most celebrated seafood restaurants.

Understated elegance: Le Buot, a 1920s manor house nestled behind mature gardens, grazing pastures and woodland, serves as the restaurant's suitably refined setting. Intimate and antique rather than ostentatious, the property's period interior is split into distinct dining areas, with crisp white tablecloths, warm wood panelling and carefully selected artworks adding to its Gallic charm – not to mention large picture windows offering sweeping views across the bay to Mont-Saint-Michel itself.

Life on the ocean wave: Head chef Hugo Roellinger – son of legendary French restaurateur Olivier Roellinger – spent two and a half years travelling the world as an officer in the merchant navy before setting a course home to the family kitchens in Brittany. Today, his innate understanding of the sea – its tides, weather, rhythms and undercurrents – informs his entire culinary philosophy: working with small-scale fishermen and serving only responsibly sourced fare, he crafts seafood-led menus in harmony with the flow of the tides.

Poetry on a plate: What's served at Le Coquillage depends entirely on the season, the weather and the day's catch – so it's fitting that the main menu has the lyrical title 'Au gré du vent et de la lune' ('By the whims of the wind and the

moon’). However, certain dishes, such as Histoires de Homard (‘Stories of Lobster’) and Chemin des Douaniers (‘The Custom Officers’ Path’) have become signatures. The former unfolds over two courses: Breton lobster wrapped in cabbage followed by a smoky, spicy lobster-claw stew – while the latter pairs spider crab with a rich sauce made with herbs gathered from along the coast.